

For theater art it is — far more inherently theatric than the plays of some of to-day's dramatic idols! Written for a simpler playhouse, a barer stage, than ours, it had to grip the spectator's sense and fancy more compellingly, immediately, and greatly. It is puissantly imaginative, — for that reason, no doubt, it has endured, — and it glows not merely with poetry, with insight into character, with lofty thoughts and noble deeds, — the literary virtues, — but with vivid action, striking pictures, colorful contrasts, intense confrontations, exciting conflicts, and thrilling, deathless moments of sheer *drama*. It is itself only when it appeals to every sense, vibrating in a theater, entralling a crowd. It admits of "style", moreover, — a boon to the producer and an added interest to the reader.<sup>1</sup> Uninjurably, adaptable to any kind of house or scene, asking only actors who understand and auditors who sympathize, it may be interpreted afresh by the individual insight of each producer, and "stylized" with any motifs preferred. Its temporal mannerisms and conventions may be abridged or sloughed, to reveal the clearer its immortal substance. The necessary compromises of its authors with the material and intellectual conditions surrounding its original production may be obliterated when out of harmony with modern taste, or accented when quaint

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<sup>1</sup> Style is the aim and keynote of the new art of production. It seeks to divorce the theater from nature, to make of the stage no longer a "mirror" but a distinct realm of art, with its own independent rules and life. It is generally attained by simplification and elimination, presenting only the essence of the drama in hand and even this essence further unified by dominant "motifs" — in scene or light or manner of performance — till a work of pure theatric imagination, of creation, not representation, results.

LITTLE THEATER CLASSICS

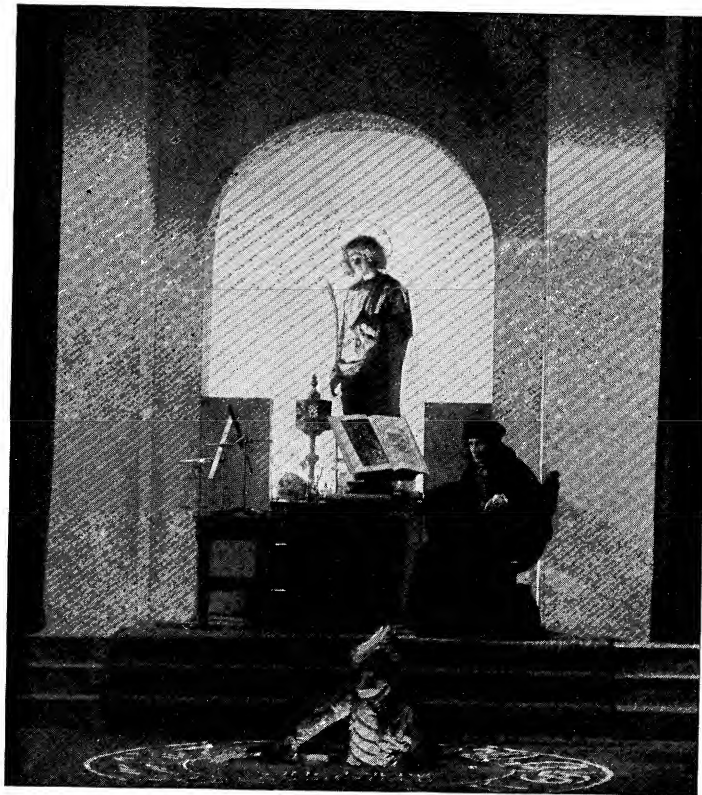
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VOLUME ONE



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SCENE FROM *DOCTOR FAUSTUS* AS PRODUCED BY SAM HUME  
IN HIS "PERMANENT SETTING" AT THE ARTS AND CRAFTS  
THEATRE, DETROIT, IN JANUARY, 1918

The appearance of the Good and Evil Angels

*Frontispiece*

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# LITTLE THEATER CLASSICS

VOLUME ONE

ADAPTED AND EDITED BY  
SAMUEL A. ELIOT, JR.

*ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS*



BOSTON  
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## PREFACE

THE Little Theater Movement is a fact. It is, in the minds of many farsighted lovers of the theater, the most important fact in the theatrical situation in America to-day. It promises in the end to replace, in all our larger cities west of the Atlantic seaboard, the wasteful road-company method and the equally wasteful stock-company method of providing serious drama and theatric art to that part of our people which will not rest content with cheap shows or moving pictures. No doubt, plays that are extraordinarily well liked in New York will always later seek the West, and the stock managers will continue to present, in routine, inadequate fashion, at "popular" prices, the out-dated attractions of the commercial stage. But the primarily artistic theater, growing up in the community because the community needs, nourishes, and uses it, will more and more meet and satisfy the demand of drama-loving, art-loving theatergoers for new, experimental, and beautiful things.

But what drama are these artistic theaters to present, which will mark them at once as shrines apart from the movie house, the road theater, or the stock company? Here admittedly has lain their stumbling-block so far. In answer to their cry for original plays, the American dramatist, though stimulated by numberless prize offers, and splendid chances to try out new ideas in genuine "workshops", has not yet given to the Little Theaters anything great, scarcely anything

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comparable with the best products of the business theater. The Washington Square Players have developed their own genre of saucy comedy, suited to New York but often disliked when presented at other Little Theaters; Stuart Walker has devised his original interludes, and brought forward the foreign genius of Lord Dunsany, in his Portmanteau Theater; the Wisconsin Players and the Provincetown Players have produced a great deal of experimental drama by little-known writers; — of course, there is advance upon, and distinction from, the mercantile farces and melodramas: else the Little Theater Movement could never have moved so quickly, widely, and far. The mere cold fact that it must, for safety,<sup>1</sup> give mainly one-act plays, and thereby *more* plays, is for many of our playwrights a stimulus to initiation and invention which the “legitimate” theater formerly stifled. But every Little Theater director utters still the timeworn plaint of the Broadway managers: Where are my plays?

It is to meet this want, learned through the editor’s actual and varied experience, that this series of Little Theater Classics is now begun. Since new plays are so hard to get, and since plays of already tested character now demand substantial royalties less and less easily evaded as the art theaters emerge from privacy, the *classic* drama becomes a natural resource for an unfrightened director. Some will recoil: Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Sheridan, a dubious Browning, a drab

<sup>1</sup> Three or four widely varied playlets in a bill make an obviously broader and safer appeal to a varied audience than one long play could hope to make. Very often a single one-act play has saved a whole production from failure. A long play puts all the director’s eggs in one uncertain basket.

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and overacted Robertson — what other classics are there? Either be stale and dull, or attempt the ultra-difficult! Such seems to the average director the dilemma that confronts him when he imagines trying classics. But purposely to open wide the many-veined, glittering mine of the drama's past, the theater's long-tested and eternized wealth, this series is brought forth.

To the reader not less than to the producer of plays this series proffers its new-old treasure. Multiplying with grateful celerity, the readers of plays are yet almost restricted to the modern "literary" drama, — unaware of the pure theater-art richly but darkly preserved in the erudite tomes of philologic scholars. How few play students realize, for instance, that contemporary with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* there appeared Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy*, and surpassed *Macbeth*<sup>1</sup> in stage-quality: ephemeral, meretricious, but marvelously effective in action! Very recently, adequate translations have reintroduced the Greek drama to our poetry lovers, but the startling stage-worthiness of Greek drama is still depreciated and shunned. The immortal work of Lope de Vega, Calderón, Molière, Kleist, Hebbel, and many other Continental dramatists is almost unknown in English translations and quite unregarded as living theatric art. This series aims to revive, both for the artistic theater and for the genuine play-lover, these forgotten or unsuspected plays, this vital drama, the best material in existence for the student of the theater to ponder, for the art theater to produce.

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<sup>1</sup> Else *Macbeth* would not have been so cut and adapted as it was.